

The Alexander Thomson Society Newsletter

Nº22, October 1998

‘Greek’ Thomson, photographer



Inside: More photos discovered
Plus: Tor House, Thomson's family

Caledonia Road Church

THERE IS little to report about plans to restore the exterior of this shamefully maltreated masterpiece and to secure its long term future, but measures are being taken to stabilise the ruin and to try and prevent further deterioration of the fabric.

The Caledonia Road Church has been chosen as the subject for a project organised by the Centre d'Etudes Supérieures d'Histoire et de Conservation des Monuments Anciens at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris, in collaboration with the Mackintosh School of Architecture. Students will measure and study the building and make recommendations for its future preservation and use. Earlier similar projects by the Centre has involved historic buildings in Romania.

St Vincent Street Church

THE FEASIBILITY study undertaken by Page & Park, architects, for the Alexander 'Greek'

Thomson Church Trust has now been completed, and a number of interesting discoveries have been made about the history and form of the St Vincent Street Church. In particular, the report demonstrates how the basement has been altered and how originally the hall below the church was much better lit and ventilated, implying that later alterations could

and should be reversed. It is also interesting to learn that while the gallery is supported on one of McConnel's patent iron beams, the floor of the church actually rests on massive timbers.

However, from the point of view of establishing the original appearance of Thomson's one surviving intact church what is frustrating is the absence of evidence – both documentary and visual. Curiously, no photograph of the interior of the church taken before the restoration of the 1960s seems to survive. Or does any member know of one?

Egyptian Halls

WE ARE sorry to say that there is nothing to report and that there seems to be no immediate hope of solving the impasse which has led to the postponement of the restoration of this remarkable and most precious building.

Holmwood House

THE OPENING of Holmwood House to the public by the National Trust for Scotland took place on August 29th. This was a great day for the society and for Thomson, while the quality of the restoration of the exterior of his finest villa ought to set a new standard for the treatment of historic buildings in Glasgow. Holmwood is now open to the public this year until October 31st. An illustrated guide book (£2.95) has been produced by the NTS.

Thomson Exhibition

ALEXANDER THOMSON: The Unknown Genius [unknown? – Ed.] will open at The Lighthouse – Glasgow's new architecture centre in the old Glasgow Herald building in Mitchell Street – at the end of May 1999 and run until August. The curator of the exhibition is Gavin Stamp and it is being designed by Murray Grigor, assisted by David Page, and it promises to be the most important exhibition to be held during Glasgow's year as City of Architecture and Design.

New material connected with Thomson is emerging, but the organisers will be glad to hear from anyone who knows of drawings, documents, photographs, furniture, ironwork carvings or anything else which might be relevant to the exhibition. A book is to be published to accompany the exhibition which, in addition to new photographs specially taken by Phil Sayer, will contain a comprehensive list of works by Alexander Thomson, and Gavin Stamp will be glad to hear from anyone who might have information about his more obscure or long-demolished buildings.

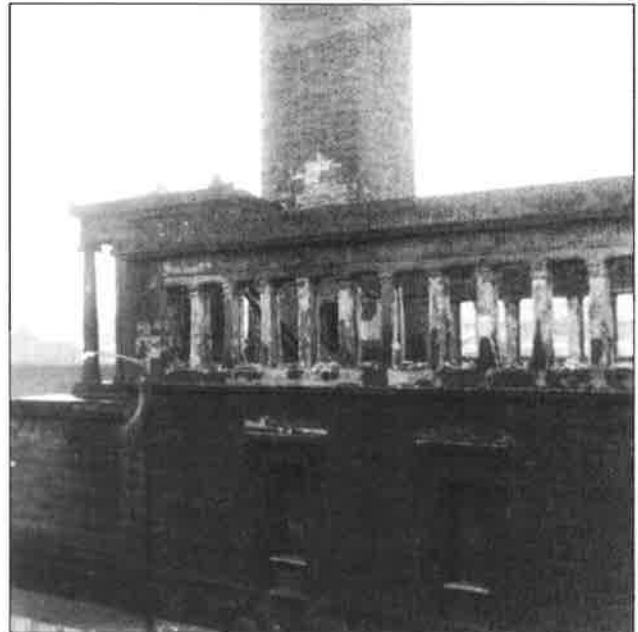
Murray Grigor is also making a 50-minute television film about Thomson which will be screened by the BBC in March (see Page 5).

Photographs

NEW PHOTOGRAPHS of Alexander Thomson's buildings have emerged in the course of research for the exhibition. In particular, it has been exciting to discover a folder of photographs which was presented to Glasgow Museums in 1934 following the death of his son, John Thomson the year before.

Bibliographer's Hell

The destination of the Hon. Secretary, perhaps, given that I managed to mis-number the last issue of the *Newsletter* 1. Just to keep your copies in order, please strike through the '20' on the last issue's cover and replace it with '21'.



In addition to commercial photographs by Frith and others, not only of Egypt and Greece but also of Islamic buildings in Seville and Cairo (material for a future Haldane Lecture?); this contains four superb prints from plates of Thomson's own buildings made by Thomas Annan in the 1860s. One shows the warehouse in Gordon Street after the disastrous fire of 1864; one shows the newly completed Queen's Park Church; while two are of the Caledonia Road Church before the railway viaduct sliced past in the late 1860s. One of these is the often-reproduced view from the south-east, with people standing outside, but the other – which we reproduce on our front page – seems never to have been published before. Taken from the north-west, it shows Thomson's tenement in Cathcart Road in the foreground and is a most beautiful and tantalising image.

We also reproduce above two poignant photographs of the Caledonia Road Church taken by Mr William Sanger with his Box Brownie from an upper window across the

Above: Caledonia Road. Below: Howard Street photographed by Frank Worsdall



road in Hospital Street – one taken before and one after the fire which gutted the building in 1965.

Another source of photographs of demolished buildings by Thomson are those taken by the late Frank Worsdall and rescued from his burned out house in Rutherglen by the then Strathclyde Regional Archives. About a third of the rolls of black and white photographs of Glasgow buildings taken by Worsdall after 1964 survive and have now been conserved by Glasgow City Archives. It is depressing to contemplate what was lost in the fire, but we must be thankful for what was saved – and these include photographs (taken in 1964) of the early Baird & Thomson warehouse in St Enoch Square on the corner of Howard Street and Dixon Street. These we reproduce here.

For Worsdall's interior photograph of Queen's Park Church, see page 16.



'Nineveh on the Clyde': The Architecture of Alexander Greek Thomson

IN PREPARATION for Glasgow's year as UK City of Architecture and Design, and to coincide with the exhibition 'Alexander Thomson: The Unknown Genius' at The Lighthouse, an ambitious documentary to explore the architecture of Alexander Thomson will be filmed in and around Glasgow this autumn and winter. Co-written with Gavin Stamp and directed by award winning film-maker Murray Grigor, *Nineveh on the Clyde* is supported by the Scottish Arts Council National Lottery and BBC Scotland.

The film will explore the influences on Thomson's imagination – from the temples of Nineveh in the apocalyptic etchings of David Martin to the medieval Glasgow tenements later explored in Thomas Annan's photography. With a specially commissioned musical score by Eddie McGuire and the recreation of some of Thomson's 'lost' buildings, *Nineveh on the Clyde* will be transmitted by the BBC in Spring next year.

For those who are members of the Alexander Thomson Society, an important sequence in the film will



Film-maker Murray Grigor and colleague in St Vincent Street Church

pivot on the work and influences of the Alexander Thomson Society. Viz Ltd, makers of the film, would like to film a scene around the bearded bust of the master to invoke the inauguration of the Society in the Kelvingrove Gallery involving as many members as possible could attend. Details will follow in a future *Newsletter*.

For those who live or work in Thomson buildings, the production team at Viz Ltd will be in touch over the next month or so if we are filming in your neighbourhood. We will try to create as little disruption as possible and we would be very grateful for your co-operation for the brief periods we are filming near your homes. The kind of help we are most likely to need would be to enable us to restore the clarity of building lines by asking your co-operation in moving cars away from the immediate vicinity while we are filming. We will, of course, let you know in more detail exactly when we will be turning up with cameras, etc.

We would also be excited to look at whatever elements of the original

interiors are still in place, as well as any photographs / images of any demolished Thomson buildings. If you think you can help please get in touch at the numbers below:

Phoebe Grigor, Viz Ltd: 01383 412811; Cassandra McGrogan: 0141 946 1463.

The Alexander Thomson Society Committee

Chairman: Gavin Stamp

Hon. Secretary: Dominic d'Angelo

Hon. Treasurer: Irene Stewart

Committee

Mark H. Baines, Roger Guthrie, Lesley Kerr, Alan McCartney, Pippy McEwen, Dr Sam McKinstry, Matthew Merrick, Mary Miers, Graeme Shearer, Sandy Stoddart

Patrons

The Earl of Glasgow
Professor Andor Gomme
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Committee Meeting

THE next meeting of The Alexander Thomson Society Committee will take place on Monday 26th October 1998 at 1 Moray Place, Strathbungo, Glasgow, at 6.00pm.

1998 Annual General Meeting

THE AGM of the Society will be held on Thursday 26th November at 6.00pm at Holmwood, courtesy of The National Trust for Scotland.

The Alexander Thomson Memorial

BY COURTESY of the Glasgow Institute of Architects, we publish the text of the trust deed prepared for the Alexander Thomson Memorial and registered in 1883.

It is of considerable interest as it not only contains a memoir of Thomson written by the Revd John Stark but also includes a list of Thomson's buildings recommended for study by applicants for the Alexander Thomson Travelling Studentship. This is a valuable as it provides the only documentary evidence for the warehouse in West Nile Street being Thomson's works, but it is also puzzling as, although it was prepared soon after Thomson's death by those who knew him well and, presumably, had worked with him, it contains several errors. 'Eskville' at Helensburgh seems not to have been by Thomson, and may be a mistaken reference to West Rockbank House (now Rockland) in the same town, while 'Craig Ailey' is not in Kilcraggan at all but in Cove and is, in fact, one and the same as the 'Italian Villa' in Cove, listed separately. 'Maria Villa' in Langside is, of course, the correct name for the celebrated Double Villa.



The Thomson Memorial

Register of Deeds, &c.

Books of Council and Session

AT EDINBURGH the Twenty ninth day of January One thousand eight hundred and eighty three the Deed herein-after engrossed was presented for Registration in the Books of the Lords of Council and Session for preservation and is registered in the said Books as follows:—

WE John Honeyman, James Sellars Junior, William Landless, Hugh Barclay, John Gordon, John Murdoch, Robert Turnbull, Thomas Lennox

Watson, David Thomson, James Thomson eighty eight Bath Street, William Leiper all Architects in Glasgow, the present members of the Council of the Glasgow Institute of Architects (herein after called the Council); and WE Robert Blackie Publisher there John Mossman Sculptor there, John Shields measurer there and the Reverend John Stark Minister of the United Presbyterian Congregation Duntocher Trustees as after mentioned; Considering that at an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Glasgow Institute of Architects held in Glasgow on the twenty second day of April Eighteen hundred and seventy-five called in consequence of the death of Mr. Alexander Thomson Architect in Glasgow one of the originators of the Institute long a member of Council and sometime President who died on the twenty second March Eighteen hundred and seventy five universally regretted by his Fellows and the public by whom he was held in the highest esteem as an Architect of genius and an amiable and honorable man as more fully set forth in the short Sketch of his life annexed hereto and at a subsequent meeting of the members of the Institute and other friends of the said deceased Alexander Thomson which took place on the ninth September Eighteen hundred and seventy five, it was resolved to raise by subscription funds sufficient to erect or establish a suitable Memorial to him: And further considering that at a General Meeting of the Subscribers to this Fund held in Glasgow on the tenth April Eighteen hundred and seventy six it was resolved that the amount which had been raised should be devoted in part to procuring a marble bust of the said deceased to be presented to the Corporation of the City of Glasgow as Custodiers for the City, and placed permanently in a public gallery for

preservation and that the residue of the said funds should be handed over to Trustees in order that the interest thereof should be devoted to supporting a Travelling Studentship or should be applied otherwise by the said Trustees in accordance with the conditions herein after set forth viz:—

(First) that the name of "Alexander Thomson" shall in all time coming be associated with the Studentships or other prizes which are paid out of the said interest;

(Second) that the Studentship or prizes shall be awarded for the furtherance of the study of ancient classic architecture as practised prior to the commencement of the third century of the Christian era and with special reference to the principles illustrated in the works of the late Alexander Thomson;

(Third) that the Studentship or prizes shall be awarded by competition every third year;

(Fourth) that if any such competition there be no competitor or none worthy in the opinion of the said Trustees of the whole or part of the Studentship or prizes which have been offered then the Trustees shall add the said interest as well as any other surplus funds to the capital fund, and the interest of the same shall be applied to the increase of the amount offered at subsequent competitions;

(Fifth) the said Trustees shall have power to frame bye-laws for the administration of this Trust to determine from time to time the area of competition the character of the prizes and the terms and conditions on which the same shall be awarded and generally to make such regulations as in their opinion shall most effectually promote the object of the subscribers as herein set forth: and

(Sixth) the said Trustees shall be bound to make a report of their intromissions with the funds and of their whole actings in relation to this Trust every third year to the Annual General Meeting of the Glasgow Institute of Architects: And further considering that the said Marble bust has been procured and presented to the said Corporation of the City of Glasgow and placed in the Corporation Galleries of that City, and that at said Meetings it was agreed that the foresaid Council and their successors in office in all time coming should be appointed Trustees in perpetuity for carrying out the foregoing Scheme and resolutions and that along with the said Council, the said Robert Blackie John Mossman John Shields and the Reverend John Stark be associated as Trustees for life (any five of the whole being a quorum)

Therefore WE the said council and WE the said Robert Blackie, John Mossman, John Shields, and the Reverend John Stark

Do hereby acknowledge to have received from the Subscribers to the said Memorial the sum of Six hundred pounds Sterling to be held and invested by us as Trustees and in Trust for the ends uses and purposes set forth:

Which sum of Six hundred pounds Sterling and the interest thereon or any part thereof, as well as any other funds which may come into our hands for the purposes of this trust shall be lent out by us on heritable Security, or on the Mortgages or Bonds and Assignations in Security of any trust incorporated by Act of Parliament in any part of the United Kingdom, or on the Debentures of any dividend paying Railway Company in the United Kingdom or invested in the purchase of feu-duties or ground annuals or of

the Guaranteed or Preference or Debenture Stock of any dividend paying Railway Company in the United Kingdom and varied when and as often as we or our successors may think proper, with power to us to lend out or invest the trust funds either in our own names as Trustees foresaid or in names of two or more of our number as shall seem to us most convenient:

With power also to appoint any one of our own number or any other person to be Factor and Secretary for the management of the Trust and to allow him the usual remuneration for Services rendered;

And declaring that we the said Trustees shall in the execution of this Trust be entitled to the fullest immunities and particularly (but without prejudice to the said generality) that we shall not be bound or obliged to do any other diligence than to us shall seem proper, and that we shall not be liable for the intromissions of any Factor to be appointed by us nor for the Securities on which we may lend out the Trust funds, nor the properties and others in which we may invest the same provided the said Factor Securities and investments were reputed sufficient or eligible at the time:

In Witness whereof these presents written by William Kidd Clerk to William & C.J. MacLean writers in Glasgow, are (together with the Sketch of the life of the late Alexander Thomson before referred to and under the declaration that the fourth and fifth lines and also the first five words on the sixth line counting from the top of this page are delete before subscription) subscribed by the parties here to all at Glasgow as follows viz.:-

by the said John Gordon, Robert Turnbull, Thomas Lennox Watson, James Thomson William Leiper and John Shields on thirtieth November

Eighteen hundred and eighty two before these witnesses the said William Kidd and Hugh Gemmell also Clerk to the said William & C.J. MacLean;

by the said David Thomson and the Reverend John Stark on first December and year last mentioned before these witnesses James Wyllie also Clerk to the said William & C.J. MacLean, and the said Hugh Gemmell;

by the said William Landless on the Sixth and by the said John Mossman on the twelfth both days of the month and year last mentioned both before these witnesses the said William Kidd and Hugh Gemmell; by the said Hugh Barclay on the fifteenth day of the month and year last mentioned before these witnesses the said James Wyllie and Hugh Gemmell;

by the said James Sellars Junior on the Eighteenth day of the month and year last mentioned before these witnesses Charles James MacLean writer in Glasgow and the said James Wyllie:

by the said John Murdoch on the nineteenth day of the month and year last mentioned before these witnesses the said James Wyllie and Hugh Gemmell;

And by the said John Honeyman on the twentieth day of the month and year last mentioned before these witnesses the said James Wyllie and Hugh Gemmell;

and by the said Robert Blackie on fifth January Eighteen hundred and eighty three before these witnesses the said Charles James MacLean and the said William Kidd:

(Signed) John Honeyman, James Sellars Jun: William Landless, Hugh Barclay, John Gordon, John Murdoch, Robert Turnbull, T.L. Watson, David Thomson, William

Continued on Page 14

Tor Castle and 'The Right Hon.'

TOR HOUSE on the Isle of Bute is Alexander Thomson's most far-flung work (apart from that clone of Holmwood in Australia) and a particularly fine picturesque villa with a belvedere in his mature style. Originally known as 'Upper Clifton House' or 'Clifton Villa', it was designed by Baird & Thomson for John Wilson, a bookseller and stationer, and built in 1856-57. The current name - Tor House - is explained by the antecedents and ambitions of its eccentric second owner, Mary Ann Bruce, as her great-great-grandson, the Very Revd Allan Maclean, Provost of Oban, here explains.



I FIRST visited Tor Castle on the Isle of Bute with my parents in 1959, and I did not visit the house again until 1993, when I was invited by Mr Alfredo Zavaroni, the present owner. I remembered as a boy going up into the tower¹ and seeing the inscriptions cut on the window panes by my eccentric great great grandmother, Mary Ann Bruce, though in reality they were not as many or as fine as I had recalled. Because of the house, and its connection with my eccentric forbear, I not only began an interest in the designs of 'Greek' Thomson, but for long imagined that he and his designs were as eccentric as the owner of Tor Castle.

Since that first visit my mother had met a later owner, who told her that 'Lady Bruce'¹¹ was remembered as a most eccentric person; but I had also learnt much about Mary Ann, as well as about Tor Castle, from family letters and papers; and realised that another two generations of the family had lived in the house after she died. As well as everyday bills, receipts for repairs, and letters of the difficulties of living in the house, there was a wonderful description of Mary Ann and the house,

which Gavin Stamp quoted during the Society's visit to the house in 1994, and which was printed in part in the Journal. The whole letter contains so many details, that it needs the background of the owner and her family to be filled in, for it to be fully appreciated. In the following account I have numbered the anecdotes to the details in the letter.

Hamilton,

Friday.

My dear Father,

Mary Caswell¹ & I went down yesterday to see Mrs Bruce who I think as mad as Bedlam and who ought to be locked up, but who Miss C. only fancies eccentric. We were summoned to go to luncheon; after considerable trouble we found "Tor Castle"² late "Lochiel House"³ formerly "Clifton Villa" as "the Right Hon" calls it. "Chinese Oriental kind of architecture" its really beautifully situated, and has a splendid view from it, there is a tower at the top⁴ which you reach by a ladder and where she says she smokes her *après diner* cigars and which was illuminated with pink lanterns (Color of brides maids dresses) as well as the rest of the house, with gas, last Sunday in honor of Anna⁵.

The house is well enough but the furniture! Oh Crimes! a guitar on a deal table, a piano, one sofa, two chairs and a small table and a picture⁶ of the "Right hon" and a bit of druggot was the drawing room. The dining room had three chairs and two tables and our lunch consisted of what she called "hieland fare", herrings liver & ham and whisky! We could not even for Mary obtain one drop of water, so she had a mouthful of porter.

"The Right hon" is the proud possessor of two deer hounds with pedigrees like her own⁷ and ten

pups of theirs (small ones just now) and a bull dog. She rides about on a rough pony, a Lockabrian, whatever that may be, to my mind its "a garron" its never groomed and she has a pair of holsters to her saddle with a couple of five barrelled pistols. She wears a plaid⁸ of the Lochiel tartan and has been to Glasgow to some shop where they are made kicking up a deuce of a row because the Marquis of Lorne has stolen the Cameron tartan⁹ for his own. She has a post box of which she keeps the key about half a mile from the house which she sometimes does not visit for a fortnight and where her letters accumulate to a great extent, we found one of Allans there yesterday. She walked with Mary and myself in a pair of fishermans boots and a plaid and some kind of a serge gown which, when it blew up, disclosed the fact that "the Right hon" had leather anyway above her knee. With all this humbug, she spoke very nicely of her visit to Ireland¹⁰ and in terms of great praise of Anna and all her belongings and of yours and my Mothers kindness to her, when there, which makes Mary think, that instead of being a mad-woman as I think, she is simply eaten up with Scotch pride and is endeavouring to introduce highland barbaric customs into civilised regions.

I enclose you the address they put on her newspapers of which she is very proud but which I was on no account to show to Allan. She says all the people call her Lady Bruce¹¹. In her hall she has a Lock-a-brian axe¹² with which to attack any one the dogs cant manage after dark - and when I add that she sends cheques for half a crown to the Stewardess of the boat she came over in, I think you will agree with me she must be a lunatic and ought



to be locked up before she does any serious damage, with dogs, axe or pistols.

Dont let out to the Bruces I have written this Mary C. will keep dark but you might come over & see for your self, but dont let my Mother or Augusta go to stay with her (for shes going to ask you) on any pretence. Love from us all to all, Yours affectly Mark¹³.

The text of the letter, which was written straight through, has been broken into paragraphs for ease of reading, but the spelling is unchanged. The writer, Mark Maunsell was stationed at Hamilton. His first wife died in January 1875, and he married Mary Caswell in February 1877, so this letter was presumably written in 1875 or 1876.

The bare bones are that my family connection with the house lasted for eighteen years, from the time that Mary Ann Bruce bought it in 1873; and after her death it was occupied by her widowed daughter-in-law, Annie Bruce, and four grandchildren; and then by Mary Ann's daughter and son-in-law, Edith and William Dick of Tullymet.

Some family memories run for generations, and one that did so was that of the Camerons of Erracht. The Camerons were settled in Lochaber, and an early centre of power was Tor Castle², its occupation by the Camerons being challenged by the Chiefs of Clan Chattan, who even today are called 'Mackintosh of Tor Castle'. The Cameron chiefs had to be content with 'Lochiel'³, and even in their own family there was a long-standing dispute about which branch

of the family should hold the Chiefship. The Camerons of Erracht believed that they were the true heirs, and from time to time attempted to establish their claim. After the '45, while many of the Lochiel family were exiled, young Alan Cameron at Erracht (later to be Sir Alan Cameron of Erracht) was seen as a threat by the Lochiel family. Trapped into fleeing to Jamaica, and after a brave and exciting time in the American Wars of Independence, he returned to London and married the only surviving daughter of a fabulously wealthy Jamaican merchant, Nathaniel Phillips. Funded by his father-in-law, Alan Cameron bought his ancestral lands from the Lochiel family (whose trustees subsequently successfully sued for the sale to be overturned), registered arms as the Chief of the Camerons (but had not paid for them,

when the Lochiel family successfully appealed against the grant), and finally, at vast personal cost, raised, in the teeth of opposition from the Lochiel family, a clan and family regiment, the Cameron Highlanders, with its own distinctive tartan⁹. All this is recorded in the biography *Indomitable Colonel* by my mother, and the consequences of the story are alluded to in the letter.

Understandably Sir Alan chose to live for the rest of his life in London, and meanwhile his old father-in-law settled in South Wales, married again and started a new family. Sir Alan's only surviving son, Nathaniel Cameron, however, while staying with his grandfather, met at a dance in Haverford West, Laetitia Pryce Cuny whom he married, and thus secured the Camerons' connection with South Wales. Ever the old soldier, Nathaniel Cameron, who had a family of eleven, is recorded as having a stand of arms in one of the rooms of his house near Swansea (of which he was the first Mayor), and that his daughters, 'under his instruction, understood and practised musketry drill'.¹² Considering this background, it is not surprising that several of the daughters had unusual lives, and for Mary Ann, the ultimate destination was a return to Scotland.

In 1835, at the age of 18, she married a distant Welsh cousin, John Wyndham Bruce, the eldest son of the very wealthy, John Bruce Knight-Bruce-Pryce of Duffryn St Nicholas and Duffryn Aberdare. Mary Ann had four children, before the break up of their marriage. Their eldest son, born when she was nineteen, was named Alan Cameron Bruce, in honour of her grandfather, followed by John and Edith. The youngest child died young.

Within ten years or so, the parents were living in different establishments on the Continent, and both were kept on a very tight financial rein. While

John Wyndham was living with a girlfriend in Austria, family tradition, supported by a letter now lost, tells of Mary Ann travelling long distance on a railway journey through Europe, and becoming very friendly with a nobleman who was also on the train. When he reached his destination, he said to Mary Ann, 'You must come and visit me in my castle'. She discovered that he was the King of Wurtemberg, and soon turned up at Stuttgart, where the Queen was not best pleased to see Mary Ann, saying 'And when, Mrs Bruce, were you presented at Court?' It happened that though Mary Ann had been presented as Miss Cameron, she had never been presented again as a married lady. She returned to London, was presented, and had her portrait painted in her Court dress (*right*), and then returned to Stuttgart, taking the portrait with her⁶. This is the portrait referred to in the letter as at Tor Castle.

Naturally, the Bruce family had no time for Mary Ann, refusing to have anything to do with her debts, but she claimed the influence of her husband's brother, Henry Bruce, the Home Secretary (later Lord Aberdare) was particularly detrimental to her cause. At some point she, and Edith, converted to Roman Catholicism, which was also a black mark among the Bruce family.

Her eldest son, Alan, was meanwhile trying to keep the balance between his parents and their respective families. Immediately on leaving Oxford, he married, set up house in London, produced six children, and studied for the law. His brother John joined the Navy, and Mary Ann and her daughter, Edith, in 1859, went on a tour of Scotland. While staying with the Stewarts at Murthly Castle, they met a neighbour, William Dick of Tullymet, a shy Roman Catholic bachelor, fond of music and playing the organ in the lit-

tle gothic chapel that he had built on his estate. The attraction seems to have been mutual, and by the time that Mary Ann and Edith had continued their tour of the Highlands, and William had followed after them, the two were engaged and subsequently married in London in 1860.

At this point, Mary Ann seems to have given up her continental touring, and made Scotland her base. She rented various houses in Lochaber, became interested in her pedigree and Cameron antecedents⁷, started adding 'of Lochiel' to her name, and having the same words embroidered on her handkerchiefs. She became interested in fishing, breeding 'staghounds' and generally all things 'Highland', and was much criticised by her son for wearing tartan plaids⁸.

Her estranged husband died in 1868 and her father-in-law, at a great age, in 1872, which eased her finances, due to the terms of her marriage settlement, but which did not make her financial position as secure as she had hoped. Although the old man owned very rich coal estates, he had left them to the rest of his large family, Mary Ann's son Alan inherited the entailed properties, thus easing his position, but his life was saddened by the early death of his wife. Meanwhile, Mary Ann's other son, John, in the Navy, had married a Scot, Annie Boyes, the daughter of an Episcopalian clergyman in a remote Banffshire parish, and it was understandable that Mary Ann wished to remain in Scotland.

She immediately began looking for a house of her own, "more suitable to my birth and the habits of refinement I was brought up in". After deciding not to settle in Lochaber, she arrived at Rothesay in 1873, and bought for £1150, on a large mortgage, a house (with its furniture, for £144) called Clifton Villa, a mile or so outside Rothesay, at Craigmore, where a year

or so later a new and convenient pier was built, where the steamers stopped. The house was set in quite extensive policies, including a field next to the house and two adjoining fields, that had been intended to be separate feus. Her Cameron family disapproved very much of this move, considering Rothesay to be remote and cold, but it seemed to suit Mary Ann admirably, being in the islands, but convenient to Glasgow, and with the possibility of congenial company. She mentions that she was particularly friendly with Lord James Crichton-Stuart, having known him through the Cardiff and South Wales connection, but she does not mention the Marquess of Bute himself, despite their shared religion.

The house seems to have been everything she had wanted, and her daughter wrote "Her house to her is not only a home but from my point of view as well as hers, a paradise. Mama is what many people fail to be in palaces, perfectly happy from morning to night and as to the view from the house it requires to be seen to be appreciated." Her brother wrote "I am glad to hear that you had the luck to fall in with such a love of a place. The scenery must be enchanting and always changing. A suitable residence for a child of the mist."

She soon changed the name from Clifton Villa, to Lochiel House and then to Tor Castle, to show her Cameron ancestry (usually referring to it as 'The Castle'), and she had 'of Lochiel' printed on her writing paper. She made the policies into a small scale Highland estate, with Highland ponies and a 'farm' on the fields; she exchanged the stand of muskets of her youth for a row of Lochaber axes in the hall¹² and even had her butter knives made like miniature battle axes; she revelled in her long ancestry and was delighted when people naturally referred to her as 'Lady Bruce'¹¹, or



'the Right Hon', whatever that meant. Letters show that this latter title was the butt of ridicule from her sisters, but there is no evidence that Mary Ann had a sense of humour to go with her eccentricities. Unfortunately her income did not match all she wished to do, and life at Tor Castle was clearly rather straightened.

In 1872, Mary Ann's son Alan went to Ireland in connection with a Trust Deed of a relative of his late wife. He met up with a previously unknown fellow trustee, a prominent Dublin lawyer and landowner, George Woods Maunsell, and his daughter Anna⁵. Within a year they were married and Anna moved to London and South Wales. Mary Ann did not attend the

wedding, but did travel at some point to Dublin¹⁰ to meet the Maunsells. Whatever they thought of her is unknown, but Anna's brother Mark Maunsell¹¹ was stationed at Hamilton, as a Captain with the 1st Royal Dragoons, and took the day off with his girlfriend (and future wife) Mary Caswell¹² to travel to Rothesay to see his sister's mother-in-law. It is his description of what happened that day, which is the letter which describes Tor Castle and Mary Ann so vividly.

Life, however, became more difficult at Tor Castle¹³; Mary Ann did not keep up the repairs on the house and was clearly in failing health. One does not know what was purely her imagination about the attacks that were made on her, and the house, at various times, but she has left a dramatic account of being garrotted in an attempted murder in the kitchen, including being knocked down by a hatchet blow into her temple, and smothered with chloroform or laudanum; and of the unemployed tenters who were encamped up above Tor Castle in the woods (see *Scots Magazine* January 1998). In 1874, they stoned the stable doors and in 1875 shot at the passage door, through the kitchen window. Local boys fired at her horse with a 'katapult'. Her sister, an Anglican nun with Mr Wagner in Brighton, said "It is a pity that you did not leave that miserable place, instead of having a policeman in the house".

However, she had cancer, and her dream began to become a nightmare. A great blow came in May 1880, when her son John, who was then Commander of the Coastguard at Holy Island, near Berwick, was found drowned on the shore, while out making his official rounds. Mary Ann was convinced that he was murdered, either by smugglers or his own men. No doubt this tragedy, leaving a young widow with four small children, has-

tened Mary Ann's decline. In November 1880, she was taken into the Glenburn Hydropathic, and died there before her eldest son, Alan, could reach Bute from Switzerland. She was only 64, and her last sister did not die until 1917, while her step-mother survived until 1908.

The terms of Mary Ann's Will and Settlement meant that it was not easy for Tor Castle to be sold. This Alan was anxious to do, since with a rapidly expanding family, eventually to number seventeen and the added burden of his brother's four children, he was having to 'economise' in Switzerland. He had ruled out moving to Tor Castle himself, not that there would have been room for everyone. His sister, Edith Dick, however, felt a special attachment to Tor Castle with all its memories of her mother, and she refused to allow it to be sold, despite the Power to Sell granted by the Court of Session. The answer was for and Annie Bruce and her little children to move into the house, letting it in the summer months (£25 per month was suggested), so as to bring in an income; and, to keep the costs of the feu duties down, by the policies being sold off as feus for building, as suggested by John Wilson, the Town Clerk of Rothesay. The feus, two being the original separate feus, and one the lawn of Tor Castle, took a long time to sell, despite the fact that houses were being built on other feus nearby; and in the end they fetched £37 for the lot, bought by John McBride, joiner in Rothesay. Thus, Tor Castle became one of a row of houses, the plans showing that the new houses were not to advance the line of the front of Tor Castle.

Annie Bruce was clearly in distress by the death of her husband and it was not the best place for her to be. For a time the children were at school in Rothesay, and then Alan arranged for

her son, Thomas, to go to school at Rugby, and for another son, Alan, to go to Dartmouth, but Annie felt the parting very much. However it is clear from the children's letters that life at Tor Castle was most uncomfortable and depressing. The houses built on the feus next door seemed to be very close, and there was even talk of the stables behind Tor Castle being sold off, though they reckoned that they could be let for £20 per year. The house itself was still in a bad state, and neither Annie or the Trustees had the money or inclination to do more than running repairs. Water had damaged the drawing room paper and the slater made the remark that 'the house seemed to have been built to give trouble'. A furious storm in 1884 led to a lot of damage, including the unroofing of the stables. W.M. Leckie, Slater and Cement Worker, redesigned the roof, 'so that instead of projecting over the walls, will be flush with the walls', at a cost of £17.10.0, the account not being settled for two years. A drawback was the manner in which the water had to be pumped up to the tanks in the house, rather than coming from a rising main.

Despite the acrimonious correspondence about the upbringing of the four children the three sons were remarkably successful in their careers. From such an unpromising start, one became a General, one an Admiral and the other a Commander and a clergyman.

Suddenly, however, everything changed at Tor Castle, for William and Edith Dick found themselves compelled to sell their estate of Tullymet, at the very time that Annie finally decided to move away from Rothesay.

Dr William Dick, by a stroke of luck as well as hard work, had become Chief Physician of the East India Company, and returning to Atholl had purchased his father's farm lands at



Tullymet from the Duke, and built a charming house for his family. His eldest son, was Sir Robert Dick, the hero of the Black Watch, killed heroically at the Battle of Sobraon in India, and his eldest son and only surviving child was William, who married Mary Ann's daughter, Edith in 1860.

William was brought up not to look for a profession or worry himself about money, and at the time of their marriage they were able to live happily, if quietly, at Tullymet and attend services

at their little Roman Catholic Chapel. William was a keen curler, and took his part in Perthshire life. The house, however, was let from time to time to shooting tenants, and as time went on, the lets lasted longer and longer and the Dicks spent more and more time in lodgings in Callander, Bridge of Allan and Oban.

Having no children of their own, they offered Tullymet to Thomas Bruce, John and Annie's son, already referred to, on the only condition that

he became a Roman Catholic, but child as he was, he was not prepared to accept the terms, perhaps due to the influence of his clerical grandfather. By 1889, there was no option but to sell Tullymet, and the letters and papers make sad reading as the property was so mortgaged that it was almost 'negative equity', and the balance was only a few hundred pounds. The estate was sold back to the Duke of Atholl, apart from the Chapel, which was soon vandalised, and is now a mere heap of rubble in a field.

William and Edith decided to live in their very straightened circumstances at Tor Castle, and they filled the little villa, by then one of a row of houses, with as much furniture and as many pictures as they could take from Tullymet. They filled the attics with trunks packed with Dick family clothes, some dating back to a century before in India, and brought boxes of their family letters and papers. The circumstances in which they lived were a mystery, but it was clear that they became recluses, "I want no friends but the Madonna and the saints", and were often fasting, their poverty being ascribed to the influence of the Roman Catholic Church. Be that as it may, they both contracted pneumonia, and died within three days of each other, in November 1891; William first. William was 59 and Edith was 52.

Under the terms of their Wills, Edith as survivor left everything to her brother Alan Cameron Bruce. Alan and his wife came up to Tor Castle to pack up, and there are pleading letters from the Dick relatives asking for keepsakes and pictures. Family tradition says that Raeburn's 'The Macnabb' was one that was given back, but I think this is fanciful. Alan was at least free to sell Tor Castle, which he did to Mrs Catherine Patison of 1 Berkeley Terrace, Glasgow, in June 1892 for £850.

Leiper, Rob: Blackie, John Mossman, John Shields, John Stark, James Wyllie witness, Hugh Gemmell witness, C.J. MacLean witness, James Wyllie witness, James Wyllie witness, Hugh Gemmell witness, Wm: Kidd witness, Hugh Gemmell witness, Wm: Kidd witness, Hugh Gemmell witness, James Wyllie witness, Hugh Gemmell witness, James Wyllie witness, Hugh Gemmell witness, C.J. MacLean witness, Wm: Kidd witness.

Alexander Thomson was born in the Village of Balfron Stirlingshire on the ninth April Eighteen hundred and seventeen;

His father John Thomson who was twice married had twenty children of whom Alexander was the eighteenth and the eleventh Son;

On his father's death which occurred before Alexander was eight years old the family removed to Glasgow;

At the age of Seventeen Mr Thomson was apprenticed to Mr. Robert Foote Architect in whose office he received those impressions of Greek Art which he made it the object of his life to embody in his own works. Mr. Foote had travelled in Greece and Italy and from hearing him and his friend Mr. Charles Hutchison discourse on the principles of Greek Art especially as illustrated by Plaster Casts of which Mr. Foote had a large collection, Mr Thomson grew to understand and eventually to become passionately attached to the study and reproduction of Classical Architecture. Mr. Foote having retired from business owing to ill health, Mr. Thomson was in Eighteen hundred and thirty seven transferred to the office of the late Mr. John Baird in which he continued for ten years. He then formed a partnership with Mr. John Baird (junior) who like himself had married a daughter of

Michael Angelo Nicholson Architect London, in his day a well known author on architecture;

During this partnership which lasted nine years the firm erected the following buildings among others:- Caledonian Road United Presbyterian Church: Italian Villa Cove: The Knowe Pollokshields &c.;

In Eighteen hundred and fifty seven Mr. Thomson formed a new partnership with his brother George;

The first result of it was the erection of Saint Vincent Street United Presbyterian Church one of the most finished and important of his works; Various others of which the more striking are given in the list sub-joined followed;

It was during this period that his peculiar genius most of all developed itself and attained to its greatest freedom and power: In Eighteen hundred and seventy one the departure of his brother for Western Africa brought this partnership also to a close: and about two years thereafter Mr. Robert Turnbull joined him: For some years previously his health had not been good: Winter especially was a season of severe trial and became increasingly so: In the Winter of Eighteen hundred and seventy four-seventy five he felt so prostrate that he resolved, if spared, to spend the next in Italy;

But it was not to be;

The weather became exceptionally severe after the beginning of Eighteen hundred and seventy five and an attack of Asthma superinduced on the weakened action of the heart from which he had long suffered took him suddenly and peaceably away on the morning of the twenty second March when he had nearly completed his fifty eighth year.-

The following Specimens are commended to the Study of applicants for the Travelling Studentship:-

Churches

Caledonian Road United Presbyterian Church
Saint Vincent Street United Presbyterian Church
Queen's Park United Presbyterian Church
Holm of Balfron United Presbyterian Church
Govan Street Free Church

Street Buildings

House and Shops Eglinton Street, East side
Washington Hotel, Sauchiehall Street, North side
Shops and Warehouses Sauchiehall Street, North side and corner of Scott Street
Shops and Offices adjoining Mechanics Institution Bath Street
Shops and Offices West Nile Street corner of Bath Lane
Shops and Houses adjoining Saint Vincent Street Church
Shops and Warehouses opposite Caledonian Railway Station Gordon Street
Shops and Warehouses Union Street East side
Mr. Mossman's Studio Cathedral Street
Royal Horse Bazaar Smith Street Hillhead
Shops & Warehouses S.E. Corner of Argyle Street and Dunlop Street

Monuments

Revd. Dr. Beattie, Necropolis, Glasgow
Revd. George M. Middleton, Necropolis, Glasgow
Mr. William Provan, Sighthill, Glasgow

Lodgings and Houses

Moray Place, Regent Park,
Strathbungo
Eton Terrace, Wilson Street, Hillhead



Above: "Shops & Warehouses S.E. Corner of Argyle Street and Dunlop Street": Thomson's Buck's Head building as featured in Stratton's Glasgow and Its Environs, 1891.

North Park Terrace Hamilton Drive
Hillhead
Great Western Terrace, Great Western
Road
Westbourne Terrace, Hyndlands Road

Villas

Holmwood Cathcart
Lincoln Villa Saint Andrews Road
Pollokshields
Beach Villa Saint Andrews Road
Pollokshields
The Knowe, Shields Road,
Pollokshields
Castlehill, Nithsdale Road,
Pollokshields
Ellisland Nithsdale Road Pollokshields
Maria Villa, Langside
Seymour Lodge, Cove
Craig Ailey, Kilcreggan
Ferndean, gate and garden wall, Cove
Italian Villa, Cove
Upper Clifton House, Rothesay
Eskville Helensburgh
Rysland, Newton Mearns
United Presbyterian Manse, Balfron

United Presbyterian Manse Holm of
Balfron
United Presbyterian Manse,
Duntocher.

This is the Sketch of the life of the late Alexander Thomson, architect in Glasgow, (prepared by the Reverend John Stark) referred to in the foregoing Deed of Trust.

(Signed) John Honeyman, James Sellars Jun: William Landless, Hugh Barclay, John Gordon, John Murdoch, Robert Turnbull, T.L. Watson, David Thomson, James Thomson, William Leiper, Rob: Blackie, John Mossman, John Shields, John Stark. Extracted from the Register of Deeds &c. in the Books of Council and Session on this and the Twenty preceding pages by me Assistant Keeper of said Register holding commission to that effect from the Lord Clerk Register of Scotland.

Alex Forbes

The Newsletter

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Back Issues

of the *Newsletter* are available, price 50p each plus 2 second class stamps, from the Hon. Secretary at the Society's address.



WE REPRODUCE above a glass lantern slide in the late Frank Worsdall's collection which shows a detail of the gallery in the Queen's Park Church. This is a fascinating image as it shows in some detail how the strip of glazing behind the squat exterior columns above the entrance to the church ran independently of the internal iron columns supporting the dome – an extraordinary detail which Frank Lloyd Wright would use over thirty years later in his Unity Temple at Oak Park, Chicago.